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January 25, 2015

Honorable Senator Crisco  
Honorable Representative Megna  
Members of the Insurance & Real Estate Committee

*Testimony in Support of SB 15, AAC Health Insurance Coverage for Pediatric Autoimmune Neuropsychiatric Disorder Associated with Streptococcal Infections*

Dear Honorable Members of the Insurance and Real Estate Committee:

My name is Craig Shimasaki. By training, I am a medical research scientist with a PhD in molecular biology and biotechnology, and am President & CEO of Molecularera Labs. I am co-founder of this laboratory with Dr. Madeleine Cunningham. We opened Molecularera Labs in response to the many families with afflicted children who were in need of clinical laboratory evidence to support the autoimmune nature of their neuropsychiatric illness.

The plight of these families is unimaginable. In a survey completed by the New England PANDAS Parents Association, they found that parents have taken their children to multiple, and as many as 10, different physicians in order to obtain a proper diagnosis and receive proper treatment. We have witnessed that once proper diagnosis is obtained and treatment has begun, these children experience significant remission of these debilitating symptoms. Our laboratory receives numerous calls and e-mail requests daily from families literally all over the world, each sharing a similar plight—the absence of knowledge of what their child is suffering from, their difficulty in finding help, and once they find help, the need for treatment once they are diagnosed. It is painful to hear of the situation these families experience with their suffering children, their financial challenges, and the lack of insurance reimbursement for treatments. We are doing what we can to help them, but there needs to be greater financial support for treatment reimbursement.

All too often these children are treated empirically with neuropsychiatric drugs, resulting in little to no improvement, and often they get worse. However, when properly identified and treated for infection and autoimmunity, these symptoms resolve. There are existing treatments for PANDAS/PANS children that work, however, most often these are not covered by insurance. Parents are left to fend for themselves, and often are left in dire financial situations because of the enormous treatment costs.





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From a purely financial perspective, it is highly likely that insurance coverage of immune treatment for a short-term would be less costly when compared to life-time symptomatic neuropsychiatric treatment and institutional care costs for these residents in your state. In addition, having fewer children in special education classes would no doubt help to pay for these treatments, not to mention the quality of life improvement for these children and their families. When appropriate treatment is coupled to proper diagnosis there is likely to be a net cost savings to your healthcare system.

I whole-heartedly support Connecticut Senate Bill 15 and firmly believe that this would be a significant step toward improving the lives of many of the children and families in the state of Connecticut.

Most respectfully,

Craig Shimasaki, PhD, MBA  
President & CEO  
Molecularera Labs, Inc.